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County Employment and Wages in North Carolina – Fourth Quarter 2017

Eight of the nine large counties in North Carolina reported employment gains from December 2016 to December 2017, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties are defined as those with employment of 75,000 or more as measured by 2016 annual average employment.) Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that employment increases ranged from 2.9 percent in Wake County to 0.4 percent in Cumberland County. Guilford County had a decrease in employment, down 0.6 percent over-the-year. (See table 1.)

Nationally, employment advanced 1.5 percent from December 2016 to December 2017 as 316 of the 346 largest U.S. counties registered increases. Midland, Texas, had the largest percentage increase with a gain of 11.5 percent over the year. Shawnee, Kan., and Caddo, La., had the largest over-the-year percentage decreases in employment among the largest counties in the U.S., with losses of 1.8 percent each.

Among the nine largest counties in North Carolina, employment was highest in Mecklenburg (693,500) in December 2017, while Catawba had the smallest employment level (88,700). Together, North Carolina's large counties accounted for 54.0 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 346 largest counties made up 73.0 percent of total U.S. employment, which stood at 145.9 million in December 2017.

Each of North Carolina's nine large counties had over-the-year wage increases in the fourth quarter of 2017, with the largest increase in Guilford (5.3 percent). Durham County had the highest weekly wage among the state's largest counties at $1,286, followed by Mecklenburg ($1,232), Wake ($1,117), and Forsyth ($1,005). Nationally, the average weekly wage increased 3.9 percent over the year to $1,109 in the fourth quarter of 2017. (See table 1.)

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 91 counties in North Carolina with employment below 75,000. With the exception of Orange County ($1,135), wage levels in all of these smaller counties were below the U.S. average in December 2017. (See table 2.)

Large county wage changes

As noted, average weekly wages increased in all of the nine large counties in North Carolina from the fourth quarter of 2016 to the fourth quarter of 2017. The wage gains in four of the state's large counties placed in the top half of the national ranking: Guilford (5.3 percent, 26th), Cumberland (3.5 percent, 122nd), Forsyth (3.3 percent, 141st), and Mecklenburg (3.2 percent, 151st). (See table 1.)

Among the 346 largest U.S. counties, 339 had over-the-year increases in average weekly wages. San Mateo, Calif., and Ada, Idaho, had the largest percentage wage increases among the largest U.S. counties (11.5 percent each). New York, N.Y., followed with an increase of 10.4 percent.

Of the 346 largest U.S. counties, 7 had over-the-year wage decreases. Clayton, Ga., had the largest percentage decrease in average weekly wages (-6.7 percent), followed by Champaign, Ill. (-1.6 percent); and Benton, Ark. (-1.4 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Durham ($1,286, 42nd), Mecklenburg ($1,232, 56th), and Wake ($1,117, 89th) Counties had average weekly wages above the U.S average of $1,109 and ranked in the top 100 nationwide. Average weekly wages in Forsyth County ($1,005) ranked 171st, while the state's five remaining large counties placed in the bottom half of the national ranking.

Nationwide, average weekly wages were above the U.S. average ($1,109) in 95 of the 346 largest counties in the fourth quarter of 2017. Santa Clara, Calif., recorded the highest average weekly wage at $2,576, followed by New York, N.Y. ($2,439); San Mateo, Calif. ($2,341); and San Francisco, Calif. ($2,232).

Among the largest U.S. counties, 251 had weekly wages below the national average in the fourth quarter of 2017. Cameron, Texas ($652) reported the lowest wage, followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas ($664); Horry, S.C. ($674); and Webb, Texas ($706).

Average weekly wages in North Carolina's smaller counties

With the exception of Orange County ($1,135), all of the smaller counties in North Carolina—those with employment below 75,000—had average weekly wages lower than the national average of $1,109. Among these smaller counties, Iredell had the second-highest average weekly wage at $920, followed by Union at $882. Alleghany County had the lowest average weekly wage in the state at $611. (See table 2.)

When all 100 counties in North Carolina were considered, 11 had average weekly wages below $650, 54 had wages from $650 to $749, 21 had wages from $750 to $849, and 14 had wages above $850. (See chart 1.)

Additional statistics and other information

QCEW data for states have been included in this release in table 3. For additional information about quarterly employment and wages data, please read the Technical Note or visit www.bls.gov/cew.

Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2016 edition of this publication contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the first quarter 2017 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from *Employment and Wages Annual Averages 2016* are now available online at www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn16.htm. The 2017 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available in September 2018.

The County Employment and Wages release for first quarter 2018 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, August 22, 2018.

Technical Note

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from summaries of employment and total pay of workers covered by state and federal unemployment insurance (UI) legislation and provided by State Workforce Agencies (SWAs). The 10.0 million employer reports cover 145.9 million full- and part-time workers. The average weekly wage values are calculated by dividing quarterly total wages by the average of the three monthly employment levels of those covered by UI programs. The result is then divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work.

QCEW data are not designed as a time series. QCEW data are simply the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. Establishments can move in or out of a county or industry for a number of reasons–some reflecting economic events, others reflecting administrative changes.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. These potential differences result from the states' continuing receipt, review and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339.

Table 1. Covered employment and wages in the United States and the 9 largest counties in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2017

Area	Employment			Average weekly wage [1]			
	December 2017 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2016-17 [2]	National ranking by percent change [3]	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level [3]	Percent change, fourth quarter 2016-17 [2]	National ranking by percent change [3]
United States [4]	145,921.1	1.5	--	$1,109	--	3.9	--
North Carolina	4,388.6	1.5	--	964	28	3.3	22
Buncombe, N.C.	132.2	1.2	167	851	307	1.8	288
Catawba, N.C.	88.7	1.8	102	841	311	2.6	213
Cumberland, N.C.	120.6	0.4	281	829	321	3.5	122
Durham, N.C.	201.9	1.0	196	1,286	42	2.6	213
Forsyth, N.C.	186.8	0.5	275	1,005	171	3.3	141
Guilford, N.C.	282.1	-0.6	332	946	222	5.3	26
Mecklenburg, N.C.	693.5	2.8	48	1,232	56	3.2	151
New Hanover, N.C.	111.6	1.6	121	875	291	1.0	317
Wake, N.C.	553.5	2.9	38	1,117	89	2.5	227

Footnotes:
(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.
(2) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.
(3) Ranking does not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.
(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.
Note: Data are preliminary. Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

Table 2. Covered employment and wages in the United States and all counties in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2017

Area	Employment December 2017	Average weekly wage(1)
United States(2)	145,921,109	$1,109
North Carolina	4,388,560	964
Alamance	61,682	781
Alexander	9,231	661
Alleghany	3,089	611
Anson	7,145	662
Ashe	7,295	712
Avery	6,453	641
Beaufort	16,046	734
Bertie	5,877	640
Bladen	12,900	709
Brunswick	31,316	755
Buncombe	132,176	851
Burke	29,508	735
Cabarrus	82,058	793
Caldwell	24,961	736
Camden	1,323	734
Carteret	22,987	684
Caswell	3,080	684
Catawba	88,659	841
Chatham	14,969	768
Cherokee	8,066	664
Chowan	4,652	748
Clay	1,923	630
Cleveland	35,293	785
Columbus	15,108	687
Craven	39,345	863
Cumberland	120,561	829
Currituck	5,993	725
Dare	16,626	681
Davidson	43,555	805
Davie	12,909	705
Duplin	18,960	687
Durham	201,889	1,286
Edgecombe	16,413	711
Forsyth	186,785	1,005
Franklin	12,180	844
Gaston	74,039	797
Gates	1,456	685
Graham	1,885	685
Granville	21,658	852
Greene	4,260	695
Guilford	282,095	946
Halifax	15,639	670
Harnett	25,292	700
Haywood	17,604	721
Henderson	38,041	786
Hertford	9,065	719
Hoke	8,456	689
Hyde	1,734	612
Iredell	72,580	920
Jackson	13,526	729
Johnston	48,458	796
Jones	1,694	721
Lee	26,139	806
Lenoir	28,649	752

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Covered employment and wages in the United States and all counties in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2017 - Continued

Area	Employment December 2017	Average weekly wage(1)
Lincoln	22,725	805
McDowell	16,089	721
Macon	11,023	678
Madison	3,833	695
Martin	6,989	621
Mecklenburg	693,519	1,232
Mitchell	4,626	714
Montgomery	9,489	727
Moore	35,062	801
Nash	40,599	770
New Hanover	111,578	875
Northampton	5,348	694
Onslow	49,357	687
Orange	70,946	1,135
Pamlico	3,253	617
Pasquotank	15,813	728
Pender	11,451	694
Perquimans	2,094	675
Person	9,928	771
Pitt	77,150	866
Polk	4,946	628
Randolph	44,938	720
Richmond	13,654	671
Robeson	38,942	680
Rockingham	25,472	694
Rowan	48,472	856
Rutherford	18,229	671
Sampson	18,271	756
Scotland	11,900	740
Stanly	19,509	693
Stokes	7,464	616
Surry	29,112	714
Swain	9,546	648
Transylvania	8,740	709
Tyrrell	1,100	652
Union	64,244	882
Vance	14,956	689
Wake	553,542	1,117
Warren	3,076	642
Washington	3,363	750
Watauga	23,592	709
Wayne	42,211	726
Wilkes	22,535	698
Wilson	36,808	838
Yadkin	9,852	692
Yancey	3,672	653

Footnotes
(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.
(2) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.
NOTE: Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs. Data are preliminary.

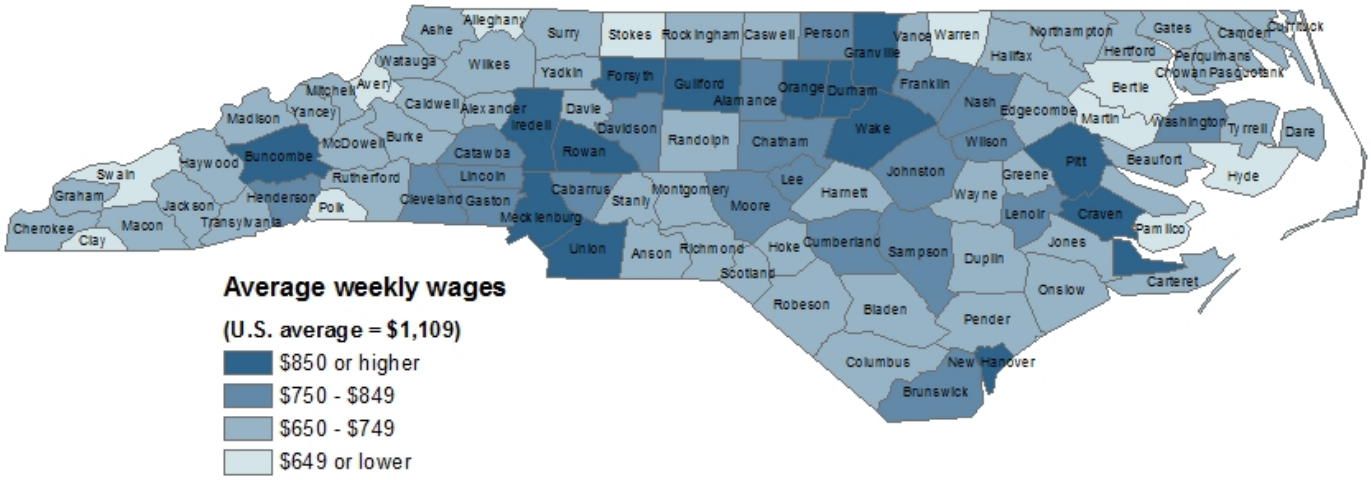
Table 3. Covered employment and wages by state, fourth quarter 2017

State	Employment		Average weekly wage [1]			
	December 2017 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2016-17	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2016-17	National ranking by percent change
United States [2]	145,921.1	1.5	$1,109	--	3.9	--
Alabama	1,955.3	1.1	928	36	2.9	32
Alaska	306.7	-1.2	1,052	19	1.5	51
Arizona	2,834.7	2.6	978	25	3.5	12
Arkansas	1,217.2	1.0	848	48	2.5	42
California	17,293.0	2.1	1,346	4	5.7	4
Colorado	2,653.3	2.5	1,133	10	4.3	9
Connecticut	1,689.7	0.3	1,317	5	2.2	46
Delaware	444.9	0.6	1,081	15	2.6	40
District of Columbia	769.0	0.9	1,812	1	2.7	37
Florida	8,712.0	2.0	975	26	3.4	16
Georgia	4,425.0	1.8	1,027	20	3.4	16
Hawaii	664.5	0.8	984	24	3.1	26
Idaho	712.4	3.0	857	46	7.1	1
Illinois	6,001.1	0.8	1,151	9	2.6	40
Indiana	3,057.8	1.1	915	38	3.6	11
Iowa	1,549.7	0.4	938	32	3.0	28
Kansas	1,390.3	0.4	894	41	1.9	49
Kentucky	1,903.8	0.5	892	42	2.1	47
Louisiana	1,918.8	0.4	933	35	2.1	47
Maine	610.3	1.2	884	43	3.4	16
Maryland	2,683.6	0.5	1,207	8	3.3	22
Massachusetts	3,582.2	1.3	1,411	3	4.4	8
Michigan	4,321.8	0.9	1,062	17	3.4	16
Minnesota	2,875.7	1.3	1,100	14	3.4	16
Mississippi	1,140.6	0.5	774	51	2.4	45
Missouri	2,809.5	1.0	945	31	2.9	32
Montana	461.4	1.0	843	50	2.7	37
Nebraska	980.9	0.9	901	39	3.0	28
Nevada	1,351.9	3.5	955	29	3.2	25
New Hampshire	661.3	0.7	1,132	11	3.7	10
New Jersey	4,106.9	1.6	1,262	6	1.8	50
New Mexico	816.7	0.6	865	45	2.5	42
New York	9,465.3	1.4	1,428	2	6.4	2
North Carolina	4,388.6	1.5	964	28	3.3	22
North Dakota	416.1	0.4	1,010	22	3.3	22
Ohio	5,409.2	0.8	973	27	3.1	26
Oklahoma	1,607.8	1.2	895	40	3.5	12
Oregon	1,900.4	2.0	1,014	21	4.5	7
Pennsylvania	5,870.4	1.2	1,075	16	3.5	12
Rhode Island	483.6	1.1	1,056	18	2.7	37
South Carolina	2,058.8	1.6	879	44	2.8	35
South Dakota	423.8	0.9	856	47	3.4	16
Tennessee	2,984.8	1.3	1,000	23	3.0	28
Texas	12,207.8	2.0	1,109	13	3.5	12
Utah	1,465.5	3.6	936	33	2.9	32
Vermont	314.7	0.5	919	37	2.5	42
Virginia	3,884.2	1.3	1,121	12	2.8	35
Washington	3,305.0	2.4	1,217	7	5.8	3
West Virginia	693.1	0.1	847	49	4.7	5
Wisconsin	2,872.6	1.0	951	30	3.0	28
Wyoming	267.5	0.6	935	34	4.6	6
Puerto Rico	887.0	-4.4	570	[3]	2.5	[3]
Virgin Islands	34.3	-11.1	827	[3]	7.7	[3]

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Footnotes:
(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.
(2) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.
(3) Data not included in the national ranking.
Note: Data are preliminary. Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

Chart 1. Average weekly wages by county in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2017



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.